



# NEWSLETTER

For all residents of Sopwell

Sopwell Residents  
Association

Issue 20  
Spring 2012

## From your editor

A lot of exciting things have happened since the last newsletter. To start with, our book, *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories*, is on schedule to be published in May. We have worked extremely hard to get this in print so I hope many of you will buy a copy to ease our financial burden. There will be many opportunities to buy the book. It will be on sale at our AGM, the St Julian's Church Jubilee tea party and Larks as well as at Waterstones and the Museum. Sopwell residents can buy the book at a discount if they buy it directly from us. Details further on in this newsletter.

Another bit of good news is that the SRA has been shortlisted for the Mayor's Pride Award for Community Project of the Year. The community project, of course, is Fenny's boardwalk. Ex-SRA committee member, Christoph Lutz, has also been shortlisted in the Inclusive Communities Award for his work on Larks and for Mandeville school. Wish us all luck at the awards ceremony on 26<sup>th</sup> April.

We are still short of committee members, especially someone to do the minutes and other secretarial work. I am still doing most of it despite standing down as Chair last year. If you value our work and are community minded, please come along to the AGM and offer your help.

Sandy Norman

## AGM 28th May 2012

The date for our AGM is Monday 28<sup>th</sup> May starting at 7.30pm. It will be held, as usual, in the Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak, Cottonmill Lane. This is our ninth AGM. We will have to do something special next year when we reach ten. Our speaker this year will talk about the Fleetville Diaries and encouraging something similar in Sopwell. After the formal business matters and the speaker, there will be an opportunity to have your say on whatever you like or dislike about Sopwell. We hope you will be suitably entertained. All are welcome.

## Larks in the Parks 24<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Marlborough Pavilion grounds, Old Oak off Cottonmill Lane 12 noon onwards. Please put this date in your diary. This year there will be a raffle with fantastic prizes (a children's party, Rugby tickets and more). There will be plenty of stalls and lots of free fun for the whole family. Entry is free.

## Jubilee celebrations

As you will know, this year celebrates the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. I am old enough to remember exactly where I was when I heard the news on our wireless of the death of King George VI and that Princess Elizabeth was now our queen. It doesn't seem that long ago. I hope that many of you are having street parties and other celebrations on the Jubilee weekend in June. If you do, please take some photos and let us know how you got on. St Julian's Church Abbots Avenue, in association with your committee, is hosting a garden tea party for Sopwell residents on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June** from 2-5pm. One half of Abbots Avenue dual carriageway will, hopefully, be closed off. In any case there will be plenty of space in the garden. Refreshments and 1950s fun and games for all the family will be on offer. Come along to make it a memorable occasion. Bring something to sit on.

## Mediation Hertfordshire

What is this thing called mediation? Mediation is a way of helping people who are in dispute with their neighbours, whether it is about the height of the leylandii trees, the noisy music played late at night, parking problems or a range of other issues which could be making life difficult. The role of mediators, who are all highly-trained volunteers, is to meet with the people experiencing the problems, initially in their own homes. The mediators listen to each side of the story and do not take sides. They ask questions and try to find out what each party would like to happen to improve the situation. They will encourage both neighbours to meet face to face and

### Inside this issue:

From your editor	1
AGM 28 <sup>th</sup> May	1
Larks in the Parks	1
Jubilee celebrations	1
Mediation Herts	1
Bonfire nights	2
Friends of Sopwell Green Spaces	2
Good Neighbours	2
Sopwell history	3
Did you know?	4
Useful contacts	4
Next issue	4

**If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of SRA. There is no charge to join and events are free.**

### Contact details

23 Tavistock Avenue  
St Albans AL1 2NQ

[info@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:info@sopwell.org.uk)  
[www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk)

discuss the problem as this is a really good way of resolving the difficulties they are experiencing. The mediators are there to run the meeting and make sure that everyone feels safe and able to put forward their point of view. The mediators do not tell anyone what to do, but they encourage both neighbours to come up with solutions which they believe will work for them.

Mediation Hertfordshire has been offering this service in the county since 1997. It was originally set up as Mediation Dacorum and still has its office in Hemel Hempstead. It is a non-profit making organisation which is independent and offers a free and confidential service. It also runs training courses in conflict resolution skills and how to deal with difficult behaviour. Below is a short case study which describes a typical case.

Two neighbours lived one above the other in a block of newly-built flats. The downstairs neighbour complained about noise from upstairs, which included hoovering at odd times and music being played at unsocial hours. The upstairs neighbour was very upset that he had not been approached directly and claimed that his neighbour was unfriendly and stared at him whenever they met in the communal hallway. Mediators visited them both and they agreed to a joint meeting. At this meeting, it emerged that the young man upstairs had autism and obsessive compulsive disorder, which affected his sleeping patterns and caused his need to do cleaning chores. He played music to calm his mood and he liked to listen to it at a high volume. When the downstairs neighbour explained how this affected him (lack of sleep and a constant alertness to any noise), there was room for them both to discuss how to manage the situation. Downstairs acknowledged that he had been unfriendly when they had bumped into each other and apologised for this behaviour. Their agreement included decisions about when noise levels should be reduced and how they might behave towards each other when their paths crossed. In fact, they ended up finding a common liking for watching horror movies and agreed to swap some DVDs by the end of the joint meeting!

Mediation is increasingly considered to be the best way of resolving most disagreements between neighbours. Taking part in mediation means that the people involved have control over what happens and are able to have a voice in the decisions that are made. Other agencies, such as the Council and the Courts, are unable to deal with many of these issues as their funding becomes more restricted. If you want to use this service, bear in mind that it is only a free service for council tenants or those that have been referred by a PCSO (police community support officer). Housing Association tenants may be able to get funding from their landlord. Mediation can take on cases for others but they would have to discuss costs. Mediation Hertfordshire is currently offering free training to St Albans residents. Contact details: phone 01442-268044 or visit [www.mediationherts.org.uk](http://www.mediationherts.org.uk).

---

## **Bonfire nights and smoking holes in the ground**

One of our residents, John Buckingham from Cottonmill Lane, is asking whether anyone remembers where all the November 5<sup>th</sup> bonfires were assembled in the 1950s. He and his mates had a bonfire which was built on the piece of spare land where the youth club is now, behind Leyland Avenue, and he knows there were lots more bonfire heaps around. Competing gangs used to pinch each others' firewood. Contact us if you have any information and we will pass it on to John as well as putting on the website. John and his friends also had dugouts on this bit of land, They were quite substantial with tin roofs covered in turf, and they lit little fires to cook potatoes on inside. John says that people must have wondered what these smoking holes in the ground were. Does anyone else remember them? Please let us know.

---

## **Friends of Sopwell Green Spaces**

In the last newsletter, we mentioned that the SRA was now part of the Friends of Sopwell Nunnery. This has now been extended to include all the green spaces in Sopwell. So we are now part of the Friends of Sopwell Green Spaces. This is just a formal arrangement as the management of our green spaces remains the responsibility of the council and Countryside Management Services. However, friends groups may take advantage of attending specific training courses relating to green space management and take part in organised events e.g. planting wildflowers or trees, hedge laying and other green projects. The SRA has always had a role in the management plan for the Nunnery Green Space but being in a Friends Group means that now there can be management plans for our other green spaces. Anyone in Sopwell can volunteer their help but it would be better if we had some names to call on when there is a specific event coming up. We wanted volunteers to plant and weave willows in the Nunnery recently but we only had a handful of names to call on. If you would like to help please contact us.

---

## **St Albans Good Neighbours say thanks**

Following the article in the last SRA newsletter, we are delighted to say that we have several new volunteers. We are now up to 170 people who do all sorts of things. Some have become duty officers once a month, some drive people to hospital and other have become befrienders or shoppers. We also have more volunteers to provide practical help on a small scale. It was a really good response. Some are able to offer help once a week or so and others just now and again. This is just what our scheme needs.

I am sure that we will always have a turn over of people as their lives change but it is good to know that we are on good form and able to provide a helping hand to those who don't have any body else to call upon when needed.

If you want to know more please phone 830713 or look up our website at [www.sagns.org](http://www.sagns.org).

---

## Sopwell history project

---

After nearly three years of research into Sopwell's history, including collecting memories from local residents, the Sopwell book is finished. *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories* will be launched in May. Well over twenty residents came forward to be interviewed and share their memories making this a true community project. Many of the oral contributions are very entertaining and it has been a labour of love writing them up. I cannot say it is the definitive history of Sopwell, as I am sure many more memories will surface when the book is read and digested, but at least it is a start. We have plans to continue the project indefinitely via the website. There are approximately 144 A4 pages of text and images. Many of the images are original from private collections. I have even discovered a photo of the mysterious Fenny, after whom the boardwalk by the river is named! The book starts with Sopwell's medieval beginnings and ends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and covers the industries in the area, the early roads and pre-war estates, the war years and the post-war estates. The final chapter covers what people did for fun: recreational activities. It is amazing what children got up to fifty or sixty years ago!

We are having to publish the book ourselves which is going to cost us over £10,000 to have it printed professionally. The SRA has no income so we have had to rely on some small grants to start us off and it is hoped we can pay the rest in a reasonably short time when the book starts selling. Considering the amount of information collected in the book, we think the retail price of only £15 is reasonable. The book will be on sale at Waterstones, the Hatfield Road museum, the tourist information centre and the Abbey bookshop. We only get a percentage of the retail price from these outlets but we keep all of it if you buy from us. So hopefully most of you will buy direct from us. Any profits made will be ploughed back into the SRA bank account to be used to continue the project and for use in the community. ***No-one on the SRA committee, including the author and editor, will earn a penny.*** As I said before, it has been a labour of love.

We have an introductory offer of £14 (including delivery if required) for Sopwell residents. Complete the voucher below, cut out (or copy) and drop it in or send it with your payment to one of the addresses given below and an author signed copy (copies) will be sent to you by special courier (one of us on a bike!). You can have as many books as you like at the reduced price but P&P is only free to addresses in Sopwell. Please buy a copy and learn more about the history of Sopwell - and maybe your road.

Sandy Norman



Yes please! I wish to purchase ... copies of *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories* at the reduced price £14.00.

I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to **Sopwell Residents Association**.

I understand that the books will be signed by Sandy Norman and delivered to me by courier.

Name: .....

Address\*: .....

.....

Tel. No. or email (in case of query):.....

Please send or take this voucher with payment to one of the following addresses:

Sopwell history book, 23 Tavistock Avenue, St Albans AL1 2NQ.

Sopwell history book, 16 Ashdales, St Albans AL1 2RA

Sopwell history book, 35 Ramsbury Road, St Albans AL1

Sopwell history book, 84 Cottonmill Lane, St Albans AL1 2EP

Sopwell history book, 62 de Tany Court St Albans AL1 1TX

\*Offer applies to addresses in Sopwell ward only.

---

## Litter pick and willow weaving day

---



Any of you who were out and about on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March may have seen the Sopwell litter pickers in action. We collected about 20 bags of rubbish and recyclable material which is good, as well as not good. It should not have been dropped in the first place. Shame on you if you are one of the litter louts!

Along with SADC and Countryside Management Services, we had a willow weaving event on the same day. Under careful instruction, we built a short tunnel of living willow in the Nunnery green space. It was paid for by Community Spaces as part of the Boardwalk sustainability grant. Once it is established it will look really lovely and I am sure young and old will love going through it. The plan is to extend it when we find more funding. Check out the website for more details.

---

## Did you know?

---

- There was a proposal in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to cut a canal from Watford to St Albans? This would have gone through Sopwell. Obviously it didn't happen but just think how different Sopwell would have been. More details in the Sopwell book.
- At the recycling centre based in Sainsbury's car park, a new set of containers has been installed? They are bright orange so you can't miss them. These not only accept the usual glass bottles and jars etc, but also most of the plastic containers which the council are unwilling to collect, such as yoghurt cartons and margarine tubs. In addition, there are containers specifically for recycling cardboard. The council's usual policy is to send it to the composting depot with our green waste, so this is another improvement.
- Cunningham ward has a community centre, called the Cunningham Hub? It is where the library was in Cell Barnes Lane and it has been given a substantial makeover. It is available to hire for community and education groups. Further information on the web or telephone: 841610.
- Mandeville school is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee in June this year? The school is asking for school memorabilia and photos. If you have any, please contact the school on 754078.

---

## Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

---

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611 | Councillor [eileenharris555@btinternet.com](mailto:eileenharris555@btinternet.com)

Councillor David Poor: 833670 | [David.Poor@btinternet.com](mailto:David.Poor@btinternet.com)

Councillor Roger Axworthy: 812681 | [rla@notmhs.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rla@notmhs.fsnet.co.uk)

County Councillor Martin Frearson 761878: [mfrearson@ntlworld.com](mailto:mfrearson@ntlworld.com)

Litter fly-tipping, graffiti: 0845 1258000 or [a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk)

Faulty road or pavement surface: 01438 737320 or [www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults](http://www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults)

---

## Next issue

---

The next issue will be out in the autumn of 2012. If you have any items for inclusion or you wish to advertise please go to the website and leave a message. Advertisement charges: £50 for half a page and £25 for a quarter page.